

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*: the first records for Seychelles

Camille Hoareau^a and Adrian Skerrett^b

Premières mentions de l'Ibis falcinelle *Plegadis falcinellus* pour les Seychelles. Jusqu'à 12 Ibis falcinelles *Plegadis falcinellus* ont été observés près de la piste d'atterrissage de Denis Island, le 22 février 2003, et jusqu'à six à La Passe, La Digue, de mi-janvier jusqu'au 27 mars 2003. Ces mentions ont été acceptées par le Comité d'Homologation Seychellois comme les premières pour le pays.

On the morning of 22 February 2003, Camille Hoareau (CH) and Mickey Mason (MM) noted a flock of six birds beside the airstrip on Denis Island whose shape reminded CH of Sacred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopicus*. Later the same day, 12 similar birds were seen by MM flying over his house at the northern end of the airstrip. They were identified as Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* by reference to guide books. A record form was submitted to the Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC), but not before a second, possibly related sighting occurred a short time later on La Digue.

Michael Betts (MB), warden of Aride Island Nature Reserve and a member of the SBRC received a report that four birds suspected to be Glossy Ibises were present at La Passe, La Digue, at the farm of Pearson Nibourette. MB went to investigate on 12 March 2003 and confirmed the identification. He informed Adrian Skerrett (AS), who found five birds present on 15 March (Figs. 3–4, p.46). According to Pearson Nibourette, one arrived in mid-January, a second and subsequently a third during February, with four present by 11 March and five on 14 March. A visiting tourist, Peter Grundy, reported six birds there on 27 March to SBRC. There was subsequent hearsay of continued presence.

Description and identification

Head, neck and body dark chestnut-brown; wings black with shiny green and purple feathers. Legs long and dark; bill long and curved, with pale arc of bare skin at base; eye dark; face black. Only one individual, on La Digue, had a significant number of small white spots on the

neck, indicative of non-breeding plumage, although a second had a few spots. All others appeared to be adults in full breeding plumage.

Status and distribution

Glossy Ibis has a broad discontinuous breeding range from southern Europe, Africa and Madagascar to Central and southern Asia, Papua New Guinea and Australia; also on the Atlantic coast of North America and in the Caribbean. It is migratory, dispersive and notoriously nomadic, European populations migrating mainly to sub-Saharan Africa (Brown *et al.* 1982, del Hoyo *et al.* 1992).

First accepted records

The records have been accepted by the SBRC as the first for Seychelles. The report of one on La Digue in mid-January would appear to distinguish this individual from the flock that appeared on Denis Island on 22 February, but some or all of the other five La Digue birds might have involved the same individuals as on Denis Island, and all sightings might relate to the same group.

References

- Brown, L. H., Urban, E. K. & Newman, K. 1982. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol. 1. London, UK: Academic Press.
- del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Sargatal, J. (eds.) 1992. *Handbook of the Birds of the World*. Vol. 1. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.

^aDenis Island, Seychelles.

^bP.O. Box 336, Victoria, Seychelles or Hazeley Brook, Keele Road, Keele, Staffs ST5 5AL, UK.